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CONTENTS

	Page
The Right Emphasis	177
An Unpublished Lecture of Swami Vivekananda	180
Role of Birth, Environment and Vocation in Education ... ... *By Sri Chunilal Mitra, M.A., B.T.*	184
The Faith of a Fanatic ... ... *By A. S. Narayana Pillai, M.A., M. Litt.*	186
Bhaktisara—A Proselyte Alwar ... ... *By Sri Saila*	188
Reviews and Notices	191
News and Reports	192

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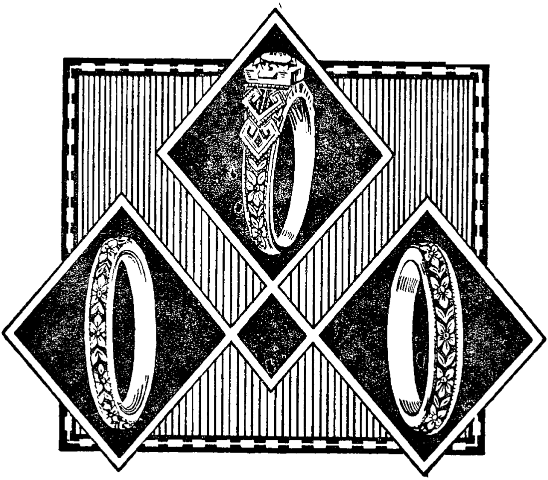

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The Vedanta Kesari

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THE RIGHT EMPHASIS

'Let quality-life be your ideal and not quantity-hunt.' This seems to be the persistent refrain of all religions, the unanimous wisdom of all philosophies. God is anxious not so much about what we do, as *how* we do. He is fastidious more about our 'adverbs' than about our 'verbs'. Bhagavan Sri Krishna is never tired of the word *sraddha* in the Gita. After prescribing the different Paths Bhagavan ends by saying, 'They are exceedingly dear to Me who follow the Path with *sraddha*, i.e., with earnestness and faith. So God is keen on quality and not on quantity. The marks of a quality-man have been given in different contexts in books of Indian religion. The three types of quality-men Gita pictures, the Sthitaprajna, the man of steady wisdom, the Bhagavadbhakta, i.e., the ideal devotee and the Gunatita, the man who has transcended the relativity of the Gunas, have all certain common characteristics. They are friendly and compassionate to all, intent on the welfare of all beings, *sarva bhuta hite ratah*; they are free from attachment and egoism, are non-resisting, calm, meditative and chaste and always reposing in the *quality* of their inner Greatness, *sve mahimni*. All the discipline of religion and ethics are directed towards producing this spiritual quality in man. But it has to be admitted that the success of religion has been only qualitative and not quantitative. Several thousand years of religion has produced a handful of saints and mystics while the general quality of human instruments and human material has not been improved. (Nay, has deteriorated!) Why is it that religion has failed to produce quality on a large scale? Huxley answers: '*Spiritual quality being the product of the ethical and spiritual artistry of individuals, it cannot be mass produced.* In a society of numbers even with the presence of spiritual giants, the goodness of more than average quality and quantity could be practically realised only on a small scale'. This is tantamount to saying that spiritual good is a fixed quantity. A spiritual religion, say of the Indian variety, cannot subscribe to this view. It believes in the existence of infinite Good and affirms that the individual is the seat of that Good. Hence Huxley's theory is untenable from the Indian viewpoint. We will come to it later on.

Nevertheless, it is a law in nature that quality suffers when quantity increases and *vice versa*. A teacher handling a small class of students finds it easy to produce creditable results on a mass scale whereas in a class of numbers, the average results are low, though there may be a few first-classes—like the few saints in society. And in this the teacher's contribution is negligible. This law works in the spiritual realm also. It is a matter of common experience for spiritual aspirants that if they are earnest about quality in life, they have to control, nay, mercilessly chisel off quantity, we mean, quantity of their physical life, their food, drink, and activities. To give oneself up to these is to forfeit quality-life. The inevitable working of this inverse ratio between quality and quantity has driven Huxley

to the conclusion we have given above, the conclusion that quality on a mass scale is impossible.

To us this theory does not appeal, though it appealed to many of the present generation as also to some of the older generation. Spengler along with others in this century, believed that the quality of culture suffers when spread over a vast population. The early Aryans also believed likewise and so were afraid of an expansion of their society. They fenced it round by rules and regulations for they thought that the quality of society is bound to deteriorate when it underwent expansion. Not satisfied with this they divided society according to grades of quality, or *varna* and the *chaturvarna* came into existence. The early Greeks also were jealous lovers of quality and wanted only 'philosophers' to rule society to produce a quality-society.

But it was inevitable that society should increase in bulk. And the problem that Huxley has foreshadowed of maintaining quality in an expanding society became very real to man. And he solved it with the help of religion. The same religion which achieved in the early days of society, the subordination of man's self-interest and reconciled it with social interest making the evolution of primitive society into civilised society possible, came to man's rescue. It exploded the theory of the inverse ratio between quality and bulk by the same argument on which it first built itself. Mystics by their lives have shown that the individual can produce infinite spiritual good. If the individual is the seat of infinite good, why should not individual be helped to produce it, and thus produce uniform quality in society. So the emphasis is on the individual. We say with Bertrand Russell that 'a good society is produced only by good individuals, just as truly as a majority in presidential election is produced by the votes of single electors'. And so Lin Yutang is wise in preferring a society where genius is spread out to a society where genius clots in a few. He says:

> As it is more important that all college students should play tennis or football than that a college should produce a few champion athletes or football players for the national contests, so it is also more important that all children and all grown-ups should be able to create something of their own as their pastime than that the nation should produce a Rodin.

Increasing numbers should take to the life of religion and spirituality and influence others through their lives and teachings. So the whole thing boils down to this: 'To make saints: That is the social problem' philosophers who live a life of true wisdom and teach it.

It will be found that since the beginnings of history, religion, philosophy and political thought were all bending their energies to achieve this lofty task for society, the task of increasing the number of quality-men, of real philosophers. Witness for instance, the simultaneous shower of religious genius all over the world in the sixth century B. C. Mahavira and Buddha in India, Laotze and Confucius in China, Jeremiah and the 2nd Isiah in Judea and perhaps Zarathushtra in Persia. Philosophers in Greece, Rome and the Continent from Socrates to Spinoza and Mill were anxious to use philosophy for human improvement, not as an instrument for interpretation, but for *remoulding* human material. 'As I read Plato', writes Professor Dewey, 'Philosophy began with some sense of its essentially political basis and mission—a recognition that its problems were those of the organisation of a just social order.' 'Here are men suffering', said Spinoza, 'here are men enslaved by passions, prelates and kings. Surely till these things are dealt with we have no time for epistemological delicacies'. This indeed is a happy revelation. Can philosophy speak with a more fervent social zeal, with greater thirst for improving the quality of mankind? Almost the same social enthusiasm characterises the political philosophies of the medieval and modern periods in history. The dominant quality

of medieval political thinking lies in its treatment of politics as a branch of morals. Coming to modern times, Rousseau, the spirit of true democracy, emphasised the dignity and inner quality of man and pleaded for the individual's enthronement. His influence first made positive democracy a live doctrine in the world of politics. In Marx's communist philosophy the individual's quality gets a higher status and better treatment. He advocated a classless society to give full scope to the individual's development. But all these philosophies, political and otherwise did not bring about the expected benefit on humanity. The Greek City States with their wise philosophers, easily outdid the modern Republics of South America in the number of their revolutions and the communist outbursts broke all previous records in their ghastly atrocities. The reason for their failure is to be found in the fact that the advocates of these philosophies lacked quality, lacked realization of the spiritual quality of man, and practice of the realization. 'Internationalism, or any other 'ism', for that matter, observes Middleton Murray, 'must begin at home, by a ruthless sacrifice of the ego.' This was wanting in the above thinkers and so their efforts did not achieve much. On the other side, the saints and mystics lacked the quantity-sense. In their over-enthusiasm for spiritual quality, they set up standards too high for the average masses to emulate. So then, a philosophy that anxiously sought the improvement of the quality of man and that too for the *whole* humanity, yoked to the religion of love for the masses and concern for their wants became the crying need of the 19th century. The common man the world over has been awakened to the sense of his dignity and his demand for a quality-life and freedom was irresistible. And the demand was fulfilled again from India.

Kant had foreshadowed such a philosophy and religion in his 'categorical Imperative' which exhorted to 'treat every man as an end in himself and not as a means'. 'Treat every Jiva as Shiva' said Sri Ramakrishna and it was in this saint that the new social philosophy for the century had its birth. Sri Ramakrishna was the philosophy and Swami Vivekananda the religion, one the realization and the other the action, of this New Religion which the world of the later 19th century was thirsting for. The respect for the 'other fellow's' individuality is in Sri Ramakrishna's social ethics a cause as well as an effect of his 'appreciation' of other faiths. He was profoundly convinced of the dignity of individual manhood and personality and these were to him a sacred phenomenon. Consistently enough, Man-making religion was the pith and marrow of the social philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. His untiring message of strength, his Man-born-to-conquer-Naturism, his warm advocacy of religious and social reform as well as his crusade against poverty were all directed towards raising man to the limit of his real inner spiritual quality. 'For centuries,' says he, 'the masses have been told all over the world that they are not human beings. They have been so frightened for centuries till they have nearly become animals.' And so these have to be given back their individuality and freedom of growth, each one of them. They have to be transformed into perfect men, non-resisting, chaste, calm, steady and wise, into the ideal Vedantin the Gita speaks of. 'And until everyone in the world is lifted up to that level' Swami Vivekananda says 'I have no rest.'

He saw the Indian masses groaning under the tyranny of starvation, ignorance and ill-health. To extricate them from this plight he passionately pleaded for the study and practice of Western scientific methods of agriculture and industrial production and for the consequent raising of the standard of life. But more than that he wanted to save the Indian masses from the tyranny of an over-spiritual atmosphere, which he calls the tyranny of the sages. 'Let the masses enjoy to their fill their share of worldly

goods and when they are surfeited, let them give up. Why coerce them into an ascetic ideal.' 'But you see,' says he, 'those vast millions are forced to accept this ascetic ideal by tyranny. This has got to stop. If it is possible to make a society where the spiritual giant will be produced and all the rest of the people will be happy, as well, that is good. But if millions have to be ground down, that is unjust. Better that the one great man should suffer for the salvation of the world.' Very significant words these! Love for the teeming millions of India never spoke out with a more heaving heart its anxiety for their material and spiritual weal. No more this tyranny of quality, the tyranny of over-spirituality. Nay the spiritual men of India should toil for bringing to the door of the masses not only their daily bread, but their spiritual bread also. And so Swami Vivekananda wanted the *sannyasins* of the organisation he started to go throughout the country spreading Man-making education as well as spirituality to the masses. Thus to him the problem whether spiritual good can be mass produced or not stood solved long ago. In him speaks as at no other time the blazing fervour of a quality-life, pleading not for himself but for the whole lump of humanity for a life of the highest quality. So the right emphasis is certainly on 'quality' but none the less on 'quantity.'

When the utter disregard for life, the new frenzy of our age has decimated the quantity of humanity, when quality attaches itself not to spirituality but to power, violence and pelf, this new religion of Swami Vivekananda, that promises to give back to the whole bulk of humanity quality-life comes as manna. Are we ready to receive this timely and heavenly gift?

AN UNPUBLISHED LECTURE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA[1]

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the subject for this morning was to have been the Vedanta Philosophy. That subject itself is interesting, but rather dry and very vast.

Meanwhile, I have been asked by your President and some of the ladies and gentlemen here to tell them something about my work and what I have been doing. It may be interesting to some here, but not so much so to me. In fact, I don't quite know how to tell it to you, for this will have been the first time in my life that I have spoken on that subject.

Now, to understand what I have been trying to do, in my small way, I will take you, in imagination, to India. We have not time to go into all the details and all the ramifications of the subject; nor is it possible for you to understand all the complexities in a foreign race, in this short time. Suffice it to say, I will at least try to give you a little picture of what India is like.

It is like a gigantic building all tumbled down, in ruins. At first sight, then, there is little hope. It is a nation gone and ruined. But you wait and study, then you see something beyond that. The truth is that so long as the principle, the ideal, of which the outer man is the expression, is not hurt or destroyed, the man lives, and there is hope for that man. If your coat is stolen twenty times, that is no reason why you should be destroyed. You can get a new coat. The coat is unessential. The fact that a rich man is robbed does not hurt the vitality of the man, does not mean death. The man will survive.

Standing on this principle, we look in and we see—what? India is no longer a

[1] This lecture, reproduced from *Vedanta and the West*, was delivered by Swami Vivekananda to the Shakespeare Club of Pasadena, California, on Jan. 27,1900. It was recorded in a notebook which has recently been given to the Editors of the said journal by Mrs. Ida Herman, a personal friend of the Swami.

political power; it is an enslaved race. Indians have no say, no voice in their own government; they are three hundred millions of slaves—nothing more! The average income of a man in India is two shillings a month. The common state of the vast mass of the people is starvation, so that, with the least decrease in income, millions die. A little famine means death. So there, too, when I look on that side of India, I see ruin—hopeless ruin.

But we find that the Indian race never stood for wealth. Although they acquired immense wealth, perhaps more than any other nation ever acquired, yet the nation did not stand for wealth. It was a powerful race for ages, yet we find that that nation never stood for power, never went out of the country to conquer. Quite content within their own boundaries, they never fought anybody. The Indian nation never stood for imperial glory. Wealth and power, then, were not the ideals of the race.

What then? Whether they were wrong or right—that is not the question we discuss—that nation, among all the children of men, has believed, and believed intensely, that this life is not real. The real is God; and they must cling unto that God, through thick and thin. In the midst of their degradation, religion came *first*. The Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, walks religiously, marries religiously, robs religiously.

Did you ever see such a country? If you want to get up a gang of robbers, the leader will have to preach some sort of religion, then formulate some bogus metaphysics, and say that his method is the clearest and quickest way to get to God. Then he finds a following. Otherwise, not. That shows that the vitality of the race, the mission of the race is religion; and because that has not been touched, therefore that race lives.

See Rome. Rome's mission was imperial power, expansion. And as soon as that was touched, Rome fell to pieces, passed out. The mission of Greece was intellect; as soon as that was touched, why, Greece passed out. So in modern times, Spain, and all these modern countries. Each nation has a mission for the world. So long as that mission is not hurt, that nation lives, despite every difficulty. But as soon as its mission is destroyed, the nation collapses.

Now, that vitality of India has not been touched yet. They have not given up that, and it is still strong—inspite of all their superstitions. Hideous superstitions are there, most revolting, some of them—never mind. The national life current is still there—the mission of the race.

The Indian nation never will be a powerful, conquering people—never. They will never be a great political power; that is not their business, that is not the note India has to play in the great harmony of nations. But what has she to play? God, and God alone. She clings unto that like grim death. Still there is hope there.

So then, after your analysis, you come to the conclusion that all these things, all this poverty and misery, are of no consequence—the man is living still, and therefore there is hope.

Well! You see religious activities going on all through the country. I don't recall a year that has not given birth to several new sects in India. The stronger the current, the more the whirlpools and eddies. Sects are not signs of decay, they are a sign of life. Let sects multiply, till the time comes when every one of us is a sect, each individual. We need not quarrel about that.

Now, take your country. (I don't mean any criticism.) Here the social laws, the political formation, everything, is made to facilitate man's journey in this life. He may live very happily so long as he is on this earth. Look at your streets—how clean! Your beautiful cities! And in how many ways a man can make money! How many channels to get enjoyment in this life! But, if a man here should say, 'Now look here, I shall sit down under this tree and meditate; I don't want to work', why, he would have to go to jail. See? There would be no chance for him

at all. None. A man can live in this society only if he falls in line. He has to join in this rush for the enjoyment of good in this life, or he dies.

Now let us go back to India. There, if a man says, 'I shall go and sit on the top of that mountain and look at the tip of my nose all the rest of my days', everybody says, 'Go, and God speed to you!' He need not speak a word. Somebody brings him a little food; somebody else brings him a little cloth, and he is all right. But if a man says, 'Behold, I am going to enjoy a little of this life,' every door is closed to him.

I say that the ideas of both countries are unjust. I see no reason why a man here should not sit down and look at the tip of his nose if he likes. Why should everybody here do just what the majority here does? I see no reason.

Nor why, in India, a man should not have the goods of this life and make money. But you see how those vast millions are forced to accept the opposite point of view by tyranny. This is the tyranny of the sages. This is the tyranny of the great, tyranny of the spiritual, tyranny of the intellectual, tyranny of the wise. And the tyranny of the wise, mind you, is much more powerful than the tyranny of the ignorant. The wise, the intellectual, when they take to forcing their opinions upon others, know a hundred thousand ways to make bonds and barriers which it is not in the power of the ignorant to break.

Now, I say that this thing has got to stop. There is no use in sacrificing millions and millions of people to produce one spiritual giant. If it is possible to make a society where the spiritual giant will be produced and all the rest of the people will be happy, as well, that is good; but if the millions have to be ground down, that is unjust. Better that the one great man should suffer for the salvation of the world.

In every nation you will have to work through their methods. To every man you will have to speak in his own language. Now, in England or in America, if you want to preach religion to them, you will have to work through political methods—make organisations, societies, with voting, balloting, a president, and so on, because that is the language, the method of the western race. On the other hand, if you want to speak of politics in India, you must speak through the language of religion. You will have to tell them something like this: 'The man who cleans his house every morning will acquire such and such an amount of merit, he will go to heaven, or he comes to God'. Unless you put it that way, they won't listen to you. It is a question of language. The thing done is the same. But with every race, you will have to speak their language, in order to reach their hearts. And that is quite just. We need not fret about that.

In the Order to which I belong we are called Sannyasins. The word means, 'a man who has renounced'. This is a very, very, very ancient Order. Even Buddha, who was 560 years before Christ, belonged to that Order. He was one of the reformers of his Order. That was all. So ancient! You find it mentioned away back in the Vedas, the oldest book in the world. In old India there was the regulation that every man and woman, towards the end of their lives, must get out of social life altogether and think of nothing except God and their own salvation. This was to get ready for the great event—death. So old people used to become Sannyasins in those early days. Later on, young people began to give up the world. And young people are active. They could not sit down under a tree and think all the time of their own death, so they went about preaching and starting sects, and so on. Thus, Buddha, being young, started that great reform. Had he been an old man, he would have looked at the tip of his nose and died quietly.

The Order is not a church and the people who join the Order are not priests. There is an absolute difference between the priests and the Sannyasins. In India,

priesthood, like every other business in social life, is a hereditary profession. A priest's son will become a priest, just as a carpenter's son will be a carpenter, or a blacksmith's son a blacksmith. The priest must always be married. The Hindu doest not think a man is complete unless he has a wife. An unmarried man has no right to perform religious ceremonies.

The Sannyasins don't possess property, and they do not marry. Beyond that there is no organisation. The only bond that is there is the bond between the teacher and the taught—and that is peculiar to India. The teacher is not a man who comes just to teach me and I pay him so much and there it ends. In India it is really like an adoption. The teacher is more than my own father, and I am truly his child, his son in every respect. I owe him obedience and reverence, first, before my own father, even; because, they say, the father gave me this body, but *he* showed me the way to salvation, he is greater than father. And we carry this love, this respect for our teacher all our lives. And that is the only organisation that exists. I adopt my disciples. Sometimes the teacher will be a young man and the disciple a very old man. But never mind, he is the son and he calls me "Father" and I have to address him as my son, my daughter, and so on.

Now, I happened to get an old man to teach me, and he was very peculiar. He did not go much for intellectual scholarship, scarcely studied books; but when he was a boy he was seized with the tremendous idea of getting truth direct. First he tried by studying his own religion. Then he got the idea that he must get the truth of other religions; and with that idea he joined all the sects, one after the other. For the time being, he did exactly what they told him to do—lived with the devotees of these different sects in turn, until interpenetrated with the particular ideal of that sect. After a few years he would go to another sect. When he had gone through with all that, he came to the conclusion that they were all good. He had no criticism to offer to any one; they are all so many paths leading to the same goal. And then he said: 'That is a glorious thing, that there should be so many paths; because if there were only one path, perhaps it would suit only an individual man. The more the number of paths, the more the chance for every one of us to know the truth. If I cannot be taught in one language, I will try another, and so on'. Thus his benediction was for every religion.

Now, all the ideas that I preach are only an attempt to echo his ideas. Nothing is mine originally, except the wicked ones, everything uttered which is true and good, is simply an attempt to echo his voice. Read his life by Prof. Max Muller.

Well, there at his feet I conceived these ideas. There, with some other young men. I was just a boy. I went there when I was about sixteen. Some of the other boys were still younger, some a little older —about a dozen or more. And together we conceived that this ideal had to be spread. And not only spread, but made practical. That is to say, we must show the spirituality of the Hindus, the mercifulness of the Buddhists, the activity of the Christians, the brotherhood of the Mohamedans, by our practical lives. 'We shall start a universal religion now and here', we said. 'We will not wait'.

(*To be continued*)

ROLE OF BIRTH, ENVIRONMENT AND VOCATION IN EDUCATION

By Sri Chunilal Mitra, M.A., B.T.

Education has often been defined, as the restoration of the perfection already in man. That there is something 'already' in man is never denied. But the common folk who have not the vision of a saint, a seer or a prophet, may not comprehend it. And unless the implications are fully realised that definition, to most people, is nothing but words.

However, taking the definition to be final and the 'already in man' a settled and universal formula, the next question that puzzles all is how to ascertain the degree and amount of the 'already', and 'how' that already is to be evoked and by whom. Indeed, this 'how' covers the whole range of educational psychology, and volumes have been written uptil now dating from Manu and Plato to Russell, Dewey, and others. Educationists have chalked out different aims of education hovering round this 'how'. It would be simply an unprofitable enterprise to dilate on the aims and definitions of education advanced by hosts of thinkers.

The consensus of opinion is that something is to be restored *by* someone and *to* someone. In other words, education presupposes three things—the *educand*, the educator, and the whole range of materials and instruments to be handled by the latter. It is an experience of three in One or One in three. The *educand* undoubtedly is the student, and the materials of education mean a host of things conceivable and inconceivable. But to identify the educator with the teacher only is to disregard all facts, as the term may mean the teacher, the parents, the students' society, the government, and the state of which the student is an internal part. It is thus a joint stock concern, a co-operative and a collective business, where each has had a share and where each will live or die or be acclaimed or cursed with the whole and not according to one's deserts. If education suffers it causes ruin to the teacher as much as to the student, to society as well as to the state, to the community as well as to the nation.

The student, however, is the sole concern of a teacher and it is his going concern as well. For the child is being changed and transformed every moment. Many forces are working upon the student, predominant among which are descent, the society he happens to be born and living in, and the vocation he aims at. All through his life these forces act and react upon him. None is negligible. Each is to be valued according to its role in the making up of the lad. The present paper in its humble way seeks to place a few suggestions and raises a few questions regarding these three.

Heredity, though interesting, is a baffling study. It is held by some that what a child is and what he is to be, depend largely on what he inherits. His goodness or otherwise, greatness or notoriety owes much to his descent. Here the whole argument is based on some assumptions, and is true to a certain extent; otherwise it is fallacious entirely. Because what the child inherits are the rudiments of his physical being and much of the mental Without a congenial environment, heredity does not function; it merely registers its unfortunate and premature death. It is a sheer misreading of realities to speak of and attempt to perpetuate purity of descent and nobility of birth without taking into account the influence of environment.

For A B C of the same parents are found to be differently stationed owing to differences in training. While X Y Z of different parents are found to be in the same station of life being brought up under the same environment.

Thus a human child is what it is at any stage because of its nature and nurture. But while the latter can conceivably go on without caring much for the former, the former cannot do so without the latter. In other words, the son of human parents can rise up in spite of birth but he cannot

rise up in spite of environment. Birth or heritage works in and through environment and not in total neglect of it.

So in the last analysis to preserve the *status quo* of noble birth it should be infused within the environment. *Ab-extra* and *ab-initio* birth does not function. There should, therefore, be not two separate studies of heredity *and* environment but of a *heredity-environment continuum.*

Of course, human children are not always found to be slaves to their circumstances. They can master their circumstances. And there are even solitary instances in the history of our race who can *create.* They stand as challenges to society and traditions, and rise both above nature and nurture. They are thus creative.

Without ignoring this creativity of the genius, we have most often to attribute success to natural aptitude and inclinations. That we have had no innate ideas and that mind is a *tabularasa* have been questioned by Leibnitz and finally answered by Kant. Hence, surely there is in the child something 'given' but not everything 'gained.'

This natural gift of the child, the bent of his mind, brings the question of a child's choice—selection of his work, profession and vocation. This factor of the child becomes predominant as the child grows in years. His heredity goes to the background and even sinks into nought. It is a stage of conflict and a transition. And any system of education to be worth the name must be vigilant about a child's environment and choice of vocation and may not take note of his heredity at all.

But vocational selection is a hard task, which should not be shouldered by the teacher alone. The State must step in here. And in as much as the aptitude, inclination, and ability of a carpenter do not suit a lawyer and *vice versa,* it matters much how a student is trained to obtain some-footing in his coming years of life. The educator thus cannot but look to the educand's vocation. Otherwise none benefits. It is a tragedy and a crime on the part of the individual and the nation if misfits were engaged in an office with contrary tastes. The office is deprived of the fullest service of the workers as much as the workers are bereft of the bliss of congenial work. Thus to be fruitful, education must try to solve this seemingly insoluble riddle.

Here professional selection through hereditary vocation or caste system may be given a trial. But it won't do, as a relapse to the old in utter oblivion of the present trend is impossible and unjust. Thus it is to be reconciled with the modern trend. That is, the able and the inclined sons of lawyers, doctors and engineers would take up the occupations of their fathers, and be trained accordingly; while the disabled and the disinclined of the same fathers will turn towards those of the carpenters' and the blacksmiths', the tailors' and the goldsmiths' without any hesitation and feeling of dishonour. Then only any adjusted system of education will ideally function bringing bliss to the individual and the society as well. It can bring glory to the nation and consequently peace to the state.

In the long run, however much we try, environment will always elude our grasp as in no vocation of a person can it be absorbed. For what an individual is, is not what he is-to-be and ought-to be; and what he is, is not what he should-be. And his real self always falls short of his ideal self. This is the crux of the whole thing; discontentment through contentment, a comedy through tragedy. The individual is to adopt and adjust, learn and learn *ad-infinitum.* The inner is to be expanded and merged in the outer, the outer be explained in the inner; the vocation will be absorbing the environment, until the two are almost coalescing.

To sum up: The child moves with the simplest environmental rudiments and the greatest hereditary influence. In course of time one goes on expanding and the other contracting till the former becomes almost a cypher and vocation comes in though not in the way of any replacement, but as a matter of course. It is never an act of dethronement.

THE FAITH OF A FANATIC

A Psychological Analysis

By A. S. Narayana Pillai, M. A., M. Litt.

Fanaticism is not peculiar to any age or climate. True, at certain periods in history and in certain places in the world there have been more violent manifesta. tions of it. But that is a difference only of degree, not of kind.

Nor is it only in the field of religion or theology that fanaticism is found. We have fanatics in politics and in philosophy, in education, in economics and in science. 'No organization or endeavour.' says M. C. Otto, 'is immune from fanatical exploitation. The history of political revolutions or of such movements as abolition, prohibition, nationalism, imperialism and industrialism proves how real this danger may be.'[1]

Strange it is that fanaticism starts as a desire to serve others and usually ends—when it has run its full course—by harming them. The fanatic is convinced that he has a message to give which he thinks is good for all. This altruistic desire, however, soon develops into an all-consuming passion. The fanatic becomes impatient and intolerant. He cannot rest until he gets others to accept his message. He cannot be indifferent to their indifference or opposition. Opposition only rouses him and he strikes: He becomes a persecuting maniac.

Now, is this not a strange paradox—this persecution for the sake of the persecuted man? It does not make sense; it is illogical. But the significant thing is that it happens. This offers a problem to the student of human behaviour. Shall we merely condemn the fanatic, call him callous and illogical and leave it at that? Why not analyse his motives and understand his purposes? Why not study the causes of his illogicality? This essay is an attempt to do that.

II

C. E. M. Joad in his book, *Journey Through the War Mind* mentions a common paradox in war—of pursuing the adversary relentlessly when he is up, and when he is down, helping him up again with gallantry and humanity:

'To be attacking an enemy aircraft when it crosses the coast, with a view to disabling it and, if possible, burning or blowing the pilot to pieces; to pursue the same tactics with the same objective, when it is a few hundred yards from the ground, to be still pursuing them when it is an inch or even a millimetre from the ground;.........but, directly it touches the ground, and the pilot steps out of his machine, to renounce the objective which one has hitherto been pursuing with all one's skill......and instead of burning or shooting the pilot, to give him food and drink and presently to carry him off to a comfortable country house[2]......... '

The fanatic's behaviour is similar to this: Only unlike the airman who starts out to kill and may end up with service, the fanatic starts out to help and rounds off by harming. In both the cases the initial objective is renounced in the end in favour of the exactly opposite objective. 'Why is it' asks Joad, 'that men who at one moment are bending all their energies to destroy one another should at the next moment be equally zealous to preserve one another?' 'Presumably because' he answers, 'of circumstances; different sets of circumstances call into play different sets of instincts.'[3] The circumstances are different: The instincts called into play are different—and it just happens that they are contradictory, opposed to each other. The same is the case with fanaticism.

III

Fanaticism springs from the *conviction* that one's own position is absolutely right. This is the starting point of the fanatic's attitude. How this conviction is reached is a different question. The fact that is important is this conviction, the unshaka. ble belief of self-righteousness. This is the spring-board of the fanatic's mind.

The next step (not necessarily conscious and clear) is to add to this the principle

[1] *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (Ed. by E. R. A. Seligman) Vol. VI p. 90.

[2] See p. 71.

[3] *Ibid* p. 71.

that truth must be one. Contradictories cannot be predicated of the same thing. Hence the position that he has taken up is the only right position. Because it is right, it must be *the* right thing. This results in exclusiveness or what is termed 'narrowness of outlook.'

But these are not enough. Fanaticism includes in addition the *desire* to make others accept this particular position. 'The fanatic is a man of action', says M. C. Otto, 'a fiery propagandist, and unresisting missionary, ready to consume and to be consumed in the cause of spreading his belief.' Now, whence comes this desire and its compelling force? If you are right and the other is wrong you may *pity* the other or may be *indifferent* to his fate. While the fanatic may pity the 'unbeliever', he is not indifferent to his fate. He wants to share the truth in his possession with the other person and make him accept it. He feels that he should even forcibly administer the truth. In fact, this attitude is the essence and characteristic of fanaticism. We do not call every enthusiast a fanatic!

How explain the compelling necessity the fanatic feels to spread his message, so compelling as to make him even kill the person who is to be converted? (*Cf.* religious and political persecutions, the Inquisitions etc.) There must be limits to our desire to help another! I suggest that it is not a *simple* desire to help another which starts this. The real explanation of this strange behaviour is to be found in the *complex* organization of the fanatic's purposes, the combination of several motives and tendencies, attitudes and interests. We may discern two or three distinct elements in this complex organization.

There is, first, the *intellectual* interest to see truth spread, the satisfaction that comes from the knowledge of having dispelled ignorance. (We should not forget the fact that the fanatic has no doubt whatsoever that he has got hold of the truth). In addition, there is the social interest to see that a good thing or message helps our fellowmen. There is also the *moral* interest in seeing that when we have in our possession something which is valuable for all, it is our duty to give it to others so that they also may be benefitted. These complex and varied motives and interests work in his mind towards one objective *viz.*, the spread of his gospel. They urge him on towards his goal and their combined psychological strength is not insignificant. Any complex system of desires and interests, psychology points out, carries with it various feelings and emotions.

The combined operation of the several interests in the mind of the fanatic liberates much emotional energy which puts him in a state of general tension and even excitement. This energy must find outlet in activity and striving towards its goal—the goal here being the conversion of the other person's mind or reform of his political, economic or other conditions. The force and the compelling necessity, the strange and fierce obsession which characterise the fanatic's desire to spread his message are thus seen to be *subjective.* His impatience and intolerance are now understandable though not on that account excusable.

IV

Now, let us see how these released psychic forces *operate*: He is *confused,* perplexed in mind. He does not know why the truth is not accepted, especially when it is for the good of the other person to accept it. That there could be a different position which may be good for the other person is never conceded. It is regarded as impossible. Even if the fanatic is told that, he cannot believe it.

And the fanatic concludes that it must be *obstinacy* of some sort which makes the other person refuse this good offer. This obstinacy must be broken and the fanatic starts breaking it. Obstinacy (or what comes to the same thing, supposed obstinacy) provokes obstinacy and releases the forces of anger, irritation and hatred.[4]

[4] See Isaac Taylor's definition of fanaticism as 'Enthusiasm inflamed by Hatred' (*Fanaticism.*)

In addition, the fanatic's consciousness that the original purposes are not realised leads to a *sense of frustration* which increases the anger. The anger-impulse is thus augmented and reinforced.[5]

This rising crescendo of the fanatic's anger reaches its climax when it dawns upon his mind that the opponent's stand has the effect of unsettling his (the fanatic's) own mind. What if he should succeed? What then? There arises within the fanatic's soul this *new fear*, vague and undefined perhaps, but real and tremendous in its consequences. Here is a new challenge and it must be met. Otherwise, life will lose its meaning and value for the fanatic. The world which he has built up and which has sustained him so far will collapse like a castle of cards. The prospect is too terrible for the ego to contemplate with equanimity. Hence the whole being of the fanatic rises in revolt against this possible catastrophe. *Opposition must be stifled.* Emotions are roused and there is violent psychical storm. There is no place for argument, no room for reason. The original purposes are forgotten in this fury. Conditions are changed, other instincts are at play.

When passions are roused, usually some check may be offered by the intellect which perceives the consequences of a man's conduct. But when, as in this case, the intellect is clouded by confusion and the emotions are stirred violently, should we wonder at what the fanatic does?

[*Editorial Note*: The above description of the mental confusion of the fanatic reminds one of the picture the Gita verses, II. 62—63 give of the gradual fall of one deluded by attachment and desire. 'From attachment arises desire, from desire arises wrath. From wrath arises delusion; from delusion failure of memory; from failure of memory loss of intellect and from loss of intellect, *Buddhinasa,* he falls to utter ruin.]

[5] 'Thwarting of our striving' says McDougall. 'by the intervention of another person is the essential condition of the rise of angry emotion. ......Anger is objective, it is directed upon an object; or, if no definite object is present, it seeks an object upon which to vent itself. *op. cit* p. 155.

Speaking about the necessity to educate our emotions, E. L. Thorndike says that prudent persons, if they hate false logic will not commit the folly of tearing to pieces the book containing false logic. Well, a fanatical logician will do just that and neither prudence nor anything else will stop him (*Psychology of Wants, Interests and Attitudes*) p. 215.

BHAKTISARA—A PROSELYTE ALWAR

By Sri Saila

One of the earliest recorded instances of a peaceful conversion to the Vaishnavite faith is afforded by the life-history of Bhaktisara who has been canonised as a saint and assigned a prominent place among the Alwars (mystics) of South India. He was a contemporary of the first three Alwars, and his conversion is traditionally attributed to Peyalwar, one of the triumvirs to propagate the Bakti cult in Tamil land in the past.

Changing from one religion to another and from one sect to another within the same religion seems to have been very frequent in those days. Ashvaghosha and Buddhaghosha who were renowned Buddhistic teachers were Brahmins by birth. King Harshavardhana of Kanouj who belonged to a family of Surya worshippers became an ardent Buddhist under the influence of Divakara. The Tamil Saivite mystic Tirunavukkarasu or Appar, as he is familiarly known, was a Saivite by birth, became a Jain Acharya under the name of Dharmasena, and came back again to the original fold. King Sundara Pandya of Madura and Bitti Deva of Mysore who professed Jainism were converted to Hinduism by Jnanasambanda and Ramanuja respectively. Kshemendra, a poet of of the 11th century, was a Saivite Hindu but became a Vaishnava, and Saint Haradatta of the Tamil land, a born Vaishnavite, became a staunch Adwaitin. Instances could be multiplied in plenty for such inter-caste and inter-religious changes, and the

list given above is sufficient to support our statement.

No authentic details are available about the birth and parentage of Bhaktisara. Tradition says that he was a son of Bhargava, one of the Brahma Rishis, by a nymph named Kanakangi and that as soon as he was born, the heartless mother threw him away into a bush on account of his uncouth appearance and ill-devoloped form. We should consider this story as having been invented long, very long, after the times of the saint when his real name and other particulars had been entirely forgotten. The incident is said to have taken place at Mahisara,—corrupted into Mazhisai,—a village near Madras.

The cries of the abandoned child attracted the attention of a woodcutter who happened to pass that way. He took the child home and became his foster-father. We are not informed of the name given to the child by the woodcutter but we know that he had a playmate in Kanikanna a son of a farmer of that place.

It is said that the boy remained with the woodcutter for seven years. We can easily imagine that the poor woodcutter could not have given a Brahmanical education to his foster-son. As Jainism and Buddhism were then more prominent than Brahmanism, it is but natural for our youngster to have sat at the feet of a Jaina and a Buddhistic Acharya and learnt the tenets of these religions. In fact in one of his later sayings he confesses to his having 'learnt the tenets of the Sakyas and of the Samanas and analysed the principles of the sect of Sankara.' Tradition and the Guruparamparas ask us to believe that our future Alwar made a comparative study of the Vedic and non-Vedic religions and came to the conclusion that Saivism was the faith which he should follow. He assumed the name of Sivavakya, wrote books on Saivism and earnestly began its propagation.

While matters stood thus, Peyalwar heard of Sivavakya and thought that he (Sivavakya) could be of immense help if converted to Vaishnavism. He established an Asrama close to where Sivavakya was residing and reared a garden in which the plants were set topsy-turvy and watered with a pitcher full of holes. Sivavakya noticed this, and asked if the Alwar was insane. Peyalwar in his reply said that *he* was not insane, but that the questioner, inspite of his comparative study of all religions, was acting in the manner of an insane person, as he had not yet found out the true religion and the Supreme God. There was the inevitable discussion between the two with the result that Sivavakya was defeated, and he became a Vaishnavite and a disciple of Peyalwar. It was probably at this time that Sivavakya received the Dasya-nama of Tirumazhisai Alwar.

Having realised that 'Narayana was the True Tattwa that could grant salvation', the saint of Tirumazhisai began to spend his time in lonely contemplation. We may believe that his devotion to Narayana was intense, but we need not give credit to the absurd story told with embellishments by the sectarian chronicler. It is said that Lord Siva appeared of His own accord before the saint to bestow His grace, that the saint was indifferent towards the Lord, that there were some discussions and exhibitions of psychic powers between the two, and that the Lord, admired the devotion of the saint and gave him the title of Bhaktisara! The saint's glory does not appear to have been increased a bit by these adventitious aids. The saint is said to have vanquished two Siddhas, one riding a tiger and other an alchemist, but this story is in direct contrast with the statement of the saint himself 'that his entire business consisted in singing the glories of Vishnu and that he realised nothing else'.

The Alwar then began his visits to the shrines of Vishnu and finally came to Conjeevaram, and took his abode at a suburb named Vehka. It is said that Brahma once performed a sacrifice at this place, and the river Vegavati came in floods to destroy it. Lord Vishnu came to the rescue of Brahma and stretched Himself across the river as a bund. The

place began to be called Vega-setu which was corrupted into Vehka.

It has already been said that our Alwar had a playmate (and probably a school-mate as well) in Kanikanna of Tirumalisai. The reputation of our saint reached the ears of Kanikanna and he immediately came to Vehka and became a disciple of the Alwar. He was not only a devotee but also a poet endowed with psychic powers. It is said that he once bestowed eternal youth and beauty on an old woman who was doing menial services at the Asrama of our saint. The Pallava ruler (whose name has not been recorded) took her to be his wife, and finding that her beauty and youth remaimed the same' while he was becoming old and infirm, ascertained from her that the boon was bestowed on her by Kanikanna. A messenger was at once sent to bring Kanikanna to the palace, and when he came, the king requested him to bestow eternal beauty and youth on him also as he had had done to his wife. The request was refused and the irate king immediately banished the devotee from his country.

Kanikanna went to the Alwar to take leave of him, and when the circumstances of the banishment were, related to the Saint, he at once decided to accompany the devotee. He did something more than this. Repairing to the temple of Seshasayee, he informed the Lord that he was going on voluntary banishment with his disciple and requested that the Lord should also accompany them. In response to this request the Lord did roll up his serpent-bedding and accompany the Alwar and Kanikanna to a village nearby.

The departure of the Lord from the city cast a gloom everywhere, and the several portents that appeared made the king realise that the calamity was due to his irreverent attitude towards Kanikanna and his banishment. Consequently, he went with his ministers to the place where Kanikanna was sojourning and made an earnest request that he should condescend to come back to the city with the Alwar and the Lord. This request was conveyed by Kanikanna to the Alwar who in his turn entreated the Lord to return to His shrine. The requests of the king and Kanikanna were duly complied with and when they all returned to the city, the Lord desired that He should proclaim to the world that 'he who is devoted to Him is dear to Him.' Consequently when He began to recline on His serpent couch on His return to the shrine He changed His position and kept His left hand under His head instead of the right hand as before. As He did as was requested by His devotee He was thereafter known as 'Yadhoktakari'.

Some days after, the Alwar desired to visit Kumbakonam, and on his way thereto, happened to pass through Perumpuliyur (probably Chidambaram) where some Brahmans were chanting the Vedas. Thinking that the Alwar was a non-Brahman to whose hearing the Vedas should not be chanted, they stopped chanting until the Alwar had gone away. But when they began to resume the chant they could not recollect where they had left. The Alwar realised their difficulty and took a grain of black paddy that was on the path and began to split it. The Brahmans noticed this, and at once remembered that they had left chanting at a passage beginning with '*krishnanam vrihinam nakha nirbhinnam*' (*Yajur Veda*, 1—9)

When the Alwar was passing along the streets of the village, the presiding Deity of the shrine turned to wherever the Alwar went and this phenomenon was reported to a Dikshita who was performing a sacrifice at that time. He therefore invited the Alwar to the sacrificial hall and showed him due respects. This was resented by some persons and at the instance of the sacrificer, the Alwar exhibited on his person the wondrous form of the Divine Lord.

In due time the Alwar reached Kumbakonam, and perceiving the reclining form of the Lord, asked Him of the reason for the same. The Lord immediately began to rise in order to reply to the question,

but the Alwar blessed Him, lest He should transcend the limits of Archavatara. The Alwar made Kumbakonam his permanent place of residence and died there at a very advanced age. If we believe a tradition, the Alwar lived for 4700 years through his *yogic* powers.

The rule is that devotees should partake of the 'Nivedana' only after it is offered to the Lord. But at Kumbakonam the contrary custom prevailed. Offerings of food were first made to this Alwar and then to the Lord of the shrine, out of *vatsalya* to the devotee.

The Alwar calls himself a poet and he has left us two Tamil poems, one of 96 verses and the other of 120 stanzas. Both of them have been included in the *Divyaprabanda*, the collection of the Tamil works of all the Alwars. It is from these two poems that we gain an idea of the Alwar's philosophy.

The first poem is known as '*Nanmukhan Tiruantadi*, and it is on a par with the poems of the first three Alwars in diction and theme. This Alwar, who recognises no other God except Kakutsa, says that His names are pleasant to his ears, that his tongue would not utter any other name than that of Vishnu and that he is His eternal slave. He declares that a devotee need not take pains to obtain salvation, if he knows that the Divine Lord is his protector at all times and stages. He has profound faith in the efficacy of uttering the names of the Lord, and informs us in a verse that the god of death, Yama, whispers into the ears of his messengers that they should not approach the *bhaktas* of Vishnu. We know that after the propagation of the *bhakti* cult in South India, people began to show less and less faith in the Karmakanda of the Vedas. The Gita verse beginning with '*Sarva darman parityajya* etc' (Ch. 18, verse 66) is the sheet-anchor of all Alwars and our Tirumazhisai is positive that those who do not believe in this verse are the really ignorant people. He is of opinion that the Lord Himself spoke through his poems. In completing this poem, the Alwar expresses his conviction that 'You are the Lord of Siva and Brahma, You are the doer, You are the knowledge to be learnt, You are the Deed, and You are Narayana'.

The other poem is known as '*Tiruchanda-viruttam*', meaning the 'melodious song'. In some respects it resembles a work '*Siva-vakya*' which this Alwar is said to have written when he was a Saivite. This may be said to be a jugglery in words, and expresses the six qualities (Jnana, Sakti, Bala, Veerya, Tejas and Aiswarya) of the Lord in a style that is somewhat difficult and abstruse to understand. The essence of all Upanishads is said to be contained in the poem where also the author reiterates that Narayana is the Supreme God.

Poygai Alwar and Peyalwar of the triumvirates have stated that there is equality between Siva and Vishnu. This feature is absent in the works of Tirumazhisai. It is perhaps from the time of this Alwar that the disparagement of Siva came into vogue.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Hinduism at a Glance: By Swami Nirvedananda. With a foreword by Sir S. Radhakrishnan. Published by Vidyamandira, Dhakuria, Bengal. Price Rs. 4-8-0. Pp. 228.

This book is a rational survey of the essentials of Hinduism with an emphasis on the practical side. Hence it is helpful to the general educated reader who is in need of a rational and practical rsligion.

In the Introduction the author shows how historically and geographically Hinduism has been a force for universal good. In the next chapter he explains what Hindus mean by Religion. 'Everything in creation is essentially divine. It is given to man only to fully manifest the divinity within him and become divine in all his bearings. Hindu religion teaches man how he can reach this blessed goal' (p. 22). In the following sections categories like Samsara, Mukti

are discussed. The chapters on Pravritti Marga and Nivritti Marga are specially instructive. This along with the chapters on the four Yogas constitute the practical portion. The author has spared no pains to make this section useful and authentic.

The second part opens with a chapter on Prophets and Scriptures. The following chapters deal on the cosmology and mythology of Hinduism. In the concluding chapter entitled 'The Hindu outlook on life', the author gives a brilliant summary of the philosophy and religion of Hinduism, with due emphasis on the Hindu faith in man's divine destiny and an exhortation to bring near the Promised Day.

To sift out from the massive literature on Hinduism that which is essentially helpful and inspiring to the lay reader is really a difficult task. The author has achieved it creditably in this small compass. The book is printed on good paper and has a charming get-up.

Professor K. Sundarama Aiyar: His life and works. By Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, B.A., B.L Vani Vilas Press, Srirangam. Price Rs. 4. Pp. 307.

Professor K. Sundarama Aiyar, in the latter half of the 19th century, was one of the remarkable personalities in South India, who was a source of inspiring guidance to many young men of that generation. 'Though I never sat at the feet of Prof. K. Sundaraman, he has been the greatest single influence in my life—an inspiring ideal to me as a friend, philosopher and guide' writes K.S. Venkataramani. This is true of many more men of that time, for Sundarama Aiyar as lecturer and professor in different colleges had occasion to come in contact with successive generations of pupils and influence them of whom Rt. Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri was one.

Sundarama Aiyar rose from humble beginnings. By sheer dint of intellectual brilliance and integrity of character, he made his mark on the contemporary life of South India. He did not rise to higher positions than that of a College Principal. His influence was not as an official or a high executive. His life as a devout Hindu, as a man of lofty principles and character, and his intellectual acumen won him many admirers and friends.

One of the most important events in the professor's life, the biographer observes, was his meeting with Swami Vivekananda at Trivandrum in early 1893. And this event exercised a lasting influence on the professor.

It is of special interest to us to mention here that the late professor was a contributor to this journal between the years 1926 and '28. He has also written four other volumes of which the first consisting of two volumes deals with Hindu Dharma. The other works deal with Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Jnanayoga.

NEWS AND REPORTS

Birthday Celebration of the Holy Mother

The 92nd Birthday of the Holy Mother was celebrated as usual at the Math. On the 7th, the Tithi Puja day, special worship of the Mother was conducted, with Homam, Vedaparayanam Bhajans, etc. On 9th instant a public meeting of ladies was convened in the evening in the Math Hall when speeches were delivered in English, Tamil and Telugu on the life and message of the Holy Mother.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, TRIVANDRUM

Report for the year, 1943 August to August 1944

It is indeed very remarkable that in spite of the stress and strain of these days, the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trivandrum, has been able to expand its activities in different directions. The housing of the Dispensary in a beautiful permanent building, the construction of a prayer hall to accommodate 300 people, the electrification of the living quarters and the purchase of a plot of land of 60 cents to develop an inpatient section for the medical institution are the notable events of the year which bespeak the growing usefulness and pepularity of the centre.

The Dispensary attached to the Town branch treated 27,016 cases and the Ayurvedic Dispensary at Nettayam treated 5,768 cases. Besides Bhajans and Bhagavatam classes, the Swamis of the Ashrama conducted weekly religious classes for college students. The Ashrama managed one centre of Vanchi Poor Fund giving noon tiffin to 135 poor school boys and ran two milk canteens for 3 months. The Ashrama took special interest in catering to the needs of the Harijans. Among the patients attended to by the Dispensary, one-third are Harijans. The Centre conducted a morning school for fifty Harijan children and gave monetary help to needy Harijan families.

The work is steadily growing and the Ashrama management while thanking its sympathisers and friends for their help, appeals to them for added support to expand their much-need services.

SWAMI PAVITRANANDAJI'S TOUR

Swami Pavitranandaji, President, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, and sometime editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*, has come to the south to visit places of interest and the centres of the Math and Mission in South India and Ceylon. He left Madras on the 18th December and will be returning by the middle of February.

The Birthday of Swami Vivekananda falls on the 5th of January

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